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H.714

Introduced by Representatives Garofano of Essex, Andrews of Westford,
Anthony of Barre City, Arsenault of Williston, Berbeco of
Winooski, Black of Essex, Brumsted of Shelburne, Carpenter of
Hyde Park, Christie of Hartford, Cole of Hartford, Dodge of
Essex, Dolan of Essex Junction, Farlice-Rubio of Barnet,
Houghton of Essex Junction, Hyman of South Burlington,
Krasnow of South Burlington, LaBounty of Lyndon, Logan of
Burlington, McCann of Montpelier, Mulvaney-Stanak of
Burlington, Pouech of Hinesburg, Priestley of Bradford,
Rachelson of Burlington, Roberts of Halifax, Small of
Winooski, Templeman of Brownington, Torre of Moretown,
and Whitman of Bennington

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Human services; health care; Judiciary; corrections; youth and child
voices

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the
two-year Child and Youth Representation Policy Fellowship Program and a
related fellowship position to engage in a multitiered initiative to bolster child
and youth voices in Vermont, including within its legal, health care, and

1 human services systems, in ways that incorporate racially and socially
2 equitable approaches while ensuring the safety of the children and youth whose
3 voices are bolstered. The Fellowship Program requires periodic status reports
4 to various legislative committees culminating in proposed legislation
5 incorporating the results of the Program's examination.

6 An act relating to bolstering child and youth voices in Vermont

7 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

8 Sec. 1. OFFICE OF CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY ADVOCATE;

9 FELLOWSHIP; POSITION; APPROPRIATION

10 (a) Fellowship Program. The Office of Child, Youth, and Family Advocate
11 shall create the two-year Child and Youth Representation Policy Fellowship
12 Program to engage in a multitiered initiative to bolster child and youth voices
13 in Vermont, including within its legal, health care, and human services
14 systems, in ways that incorporate racially and socially equitable approaches
15 while ensuring the safety of the children and youth whose voices are bolstered.
16 This multitiered initiative shall include an analysis of the State's child and
17 youth legal representation system, guardian-ad-litem programs, supervised
18 visitation structure, and funding mechanisms.

19 (1) On or before December 15, 2024, the Office of Child, Youth, and
20 Family Advocate shall report to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight

1 Committee on the status of the Fellowship Program and any progress made in
2 achieving its objectives.

3 (2) On or before May 15, 2025, the Office of Child, Youth, and Family
4 Advocate shall report to the Senate Committees on Health and Welfare and on
5 Judiciary and the House Committees on Health Care, on Human Services, on
6 Judiciary, and on Corrections and Institutions concerning any progress made in
7 achieving its objectives.

8 (3) On or before November 15, 2025, the Office of Child, Youth, and
9 Family Advocate shall submit proposed legislation to the Joint Legislative
10 Justice Oversight Committee and the Office of the Governor that incorporates
11 any recommended changes to Vermont's legal, health care, and human
12 services systems, including necessary appropriations to support such changes.

13 (b) Position. On July 1, 2024, a new, full-time, temporary, Child and
14 Youth Representation Policy Lead position is created in the Office of Child,
15 Youth, and Family Advocate as part of the Fellowship Program established
16 pursuant to subsection (a) of this section. The Child and Youth Representation
17 Policy Lead position is established to spearhead a holistic examination of
18 Vermont's child and youth representation system pursuant to subsection (a) of
19 this section. In addition to any other duties deemed appropriate by the Office,
20 the Policy Lead position shall direct the Office's public information process
21 concerning the Fellowship Program and convene stakeholders engaged in

1 youth advocacy issues in Vermont’s communities, legal system, and State
2 entities to address and implement any statewide systems improvement
3 necessary to achieve the Fellowship Program’s objectives.

4 (c) Appropriation. The sum of \$300,000.00 is appropriated from the
5 Tobacco Litigation Settlement Fund to the Office of Child, Youth, and Family
6 Advocate in fiscal year 2025 to support the Child and Youth Representation
7 Policy Fellowship Program established pursuant to subsection (a) of this
8 section. This appropriation shall also be used to fund the Policy Lead position
9 established pursuant to subsection (b) of this section. Any remaining funds
10 shall carry forward to fiscal year 2026 for the uses outlined in this section.

11 Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

12 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2024.